

Forest Plan Revision Workgroup Meeting Notes (Draft)

Feb. 5, 2004 – Coeur d'Alene

Attendees: Forest Service: Joe Stringer, Carolyn Upton, Shawn Pearson, Sherri Lionberger, Joyce Stock, and Harry Steele. General public: Bryan Chambers, Tom Crimmins, Richard Lambert, Al Lambert, Chris McLaughin, Gwen Nessel, Ron Rower, Mike Reynolds, Glen Rothrock, Dave Vig, Bill Alexander, Alan Dragoo, Don Hull, Jerry Willis, Bill and Barb White, Richard Good, Mike Waldo, Bernie Janoski, and Jim Axtell.

Introduction

Joe Stringer – District Ranger, Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District

Goal for this meeting in relation to Forest Plan Revision:
Forming Work Groups to start on task of Desired Condition Statements

Desired Condition – What it is:

- Description of ecological, economic and social **conditions** and **opportunities** that are desirable now and in the future.
- Recognizes and considers current conditions
- Recognizes limitations – both management limitations (law, directions, policies), and physical and biological limitations.
- Utilizes public input through a variety of activities, including workgroups.

Presentations

Shawn Pearson - AFMO – Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District

- Presented information on fire risk, fire as a tool, wildland/urban interface.
- Explanation of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act and how it is designed to reduce the risk of fires that pose a threat to nearby communities.
- Registry exists for communities at risk within one and a half miles of forest. Areas are also put into condition classes that designate risk.
- Fire is a natural part of forest health and should be used as a tool.

Q: When will the forest start using fire as a tool?

A: We are already doing this. We have Placer Creek project already in place and also Deerfoot area.

Q: Do you have a set budget for this?

A: No set budget, the budget is set by Congress every year.

Q: What is the Placer Creek Project?

A: It is an area that will be burned to improve the health of the forest – brush will be burned to provide a fire break and improve habitat.

Q: How is the burning controlled?

A: It is done in portions – we monitor for air quality, moisture levels – these things factor in on how much we burn at a time.

Q: Do animals eat brush?

A: Burning improves forage for animals – provides winter ground for elk.

Q: Will you recoup enough timber to fund these types of projects?

A: We may go to RAC for funding, however these projects are not real expensive and the timber sale should pay for the costs. There is a public meeting on March 2 about the Placer Creek Project that you can attend for more information.

Q: Do you have a project planned for Bayview?

A: We are just starting to prioritize these projects.

As fire managers, the USFS job is to contain fires. New strategies are developing about how to handle fire – with the idea to let them burn, as we need fire in the ecosystem. Depending on weather conditions, we will make judgments on whether we will let the fire burn naturally. The Healthy Forest Initiative comes up with a plan to help reduce risks to neighboring communities and streamlines the process.

Q: How is *FIRESMART* program funded?

A: By the state and RAC program is also funded this way. *FIRESMART* is a private program to inform landowners how to make their land and homes into defensible space.

Q: Do you have any statistics about how thinning effects fires?

A: Yes, there is statistical evidence from several recent large fires that thinning forests help wildfires to burn more slowly.

Q: Should we maintain more access/roads to fight fires?

A: Yes – maintaining some access helps to get fire engines into more remote areas.

Q: Why do you want to improve habitat?

A: For improved habitat for game animals and also for threatened, endangered and sensitive species protection and enhancement.

At this point the group then broke down into three smaller groups to work on producing desired condition statements. The following is the results of the workgroup sessions:

Desired Future Condition Idaho Panhandle National Forest

Fire Risk

GROUP 1

- Fuel loading is reduced to acceptable levels in both the urban interface and the general forest zones
 - Prescribed fire is used to reduce fire risk where needed
 - Insect and diseased timber is removed in a timely manner to reduce fuel loads
 - A good system of roads and trails exist to allow initial attack crews, fire patrol personnel and administrative crews to reach all areas
 - Fuelwood gathering is encouraged as a means to reduce fire risk
 - Forest service works closely with counties to ensure private land fire prevention efforts are in place and enforced
 - Fire suppression crews are not put at risk attempting to save private structures where fire prevention efforts have not been implemented
 - Use thinning to create a natural mosaic of fire/fuel barriers
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GROUP 2

- Reduce fuel loading by providing for better firewood gathering practices
 - Clean up forests
 - Better access
 - Smaller green slip sales for pulp
 - Alternate uses for bio-mass: e.g. hog fuels, chip slash piles for other uses
 - Identify prescribed wildfire areas
 - Use fire as a tool to improve habitat
 - Use logging as a tool to simulate what fire would do
 - Evacuation routes should be provided for
 - Return to fire tolerant stand composition
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GROUP 3

- More fire prevention programs
- **FIRESMART** program should be mirrored on Forest Service land be a priority next to private land
- Lack of access prevents spotting of fires and impacts suppression: leave roads in useable condition
- Fuel loads should be reduced in urban interface/general forest areas
- Fuel wood should be a tool to reduce fuels
- Increase controlled burns throughout the forest
- Use logging as a tool for reducing fuels:
 - Dollar return is a consideration
 - Include fuels reduction in timber sales
 - Remove dead wood (non- marketable)

Desired Future Condition Idaho Panhandle National Forest

Timber

GROUP 1

- Timber stands represent the full range of successional stages
- Timber harvest is used as a tool to improve forest health
- Timber harvest is used as a tool to maintain existing roads and to fund watershed improvements
- Timber harvest is used as a tool to improve wildlife habitat for harvestable species such as elk and deer
- Timber harvest is sustainable over time
- Timber harvest levels are stable over the long run
- Timber harvest is used as a tool to enhance community economic stability
- All roads should be reviewed for recreational needs before decommissioned
- Structure timber harvest to maintain water quality

GROUP 2

- Faster replant after harvesting timber
- No closer than 1000 feet between logging roads/plots
- Return access to original after harvest is done
- Use timber harvest as a tool to fire reduction
- Prioritize harvest with areas susceptible to fire
- Smaller green slip sales
- Continue with and enhance commercial fuel wood gathering plan

- Increase liability for frivolous lawsuits
 - Have lawsuits handled in local courts – submit bonds
 - Create sustainable timber harvest plan: what we can grow as a replacement should equal harvest
 - Establish strict timeline for replanting
 - Local forester should make local decisions
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GROUP 3

- Tool to improve forest health
- Prioritize areas for harvest that have root rot/insects and disease
- Tool for habitat improvement
- Selective logging – sustainable
- Build restraining structures to address debris – selective logging practices could avoid this
- Need to support local infrastructure and jobs
- Need to respond to natural events (ice storm, blowdown, fires) quickly to salvage
- Consider a variety of canopy openings.

The next meeting will bring both groups (Coeur d'Alene SO and Silverton office) that met concurrently, back together to review what each groups' desired conditions were. We will try to find common themes and see if there are any objections to any of the suggested desired condition statements.

NEXT MEETING: FEBRUARY 26
7:00 PM
Silver Valley location